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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000867

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE (PFEUFFER),  
ATHENS FOR CHARGE

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA AIMS TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE IN NAME TALKS AT  
UN NOVEMBER 1

REF: SKOPJE 853 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POLOFF MNEISULER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

#### SUMMARY

11. (C) The GOM will propose, at the November 1 meeting in New York to discuss the name issue with Greek counterparts and with UN Special Envoy Nimetz, four steps that it believes would help reduce bilateral tensions and help prepare the ground for more fruitful efforts to resolve the name dispute.

The steps include forming a joint Greek-Macedonian commission to review both sides' history textbooks; an invitation to Athens to meet at any level, anywhere, to discuss a range of bilateral issues including the name; reaffirming the GOM's earlier commitments to stay out of Greece's internal politics and respect their mutual border; and proceeding with the name discussions on the basis of Nimetz's October 2005 proposal, which posited a time-phased, "triple name" solution. If forced by Athens to choose between NATO membership and changing Macedonia's constitutional name, the GOM has made it clear it will not sacrifice the name; Macedonian authorities plan to convey that message diplomatically to NATO allies while taking a low-key public stance that clashes with Greece as little as possible. We believe we should support the proposed confidence-building measures, and should consider how those measures could be operationalized to begin moving the process forward. End summary.

#### MACEDONIA'S NAME NEGOTIATOR SKETCHES FOUR CONSTRUCTIVE STEPS

12. (C) In an October 29 meeting with the Ambassador, Macedonia's negotiator for the name issue, Ambassador Dimitrov, outlined the GOM's strategy for the upcoming round of name talks with his Greek counterpart and Ambassador Nimetz in New York on November 1. According to Dimitrov, the Macedonian side is determined to "stay ahead of the curve" and will propose four specific, constructive steps to build a "more amicable bilateral atmosphere."

#### JOINT COMMISSION TO EXAMINE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS...

13. (C) As a first step, the Macedonian team will propose the formation of a joint commission of Macedonian, Greek and "independent" historians to review both countries' history textbooks. The commission could be framed within the context of the UN-mediated name talks, depending on Athens's

preference. The Macedonian side would seek to consult with countries with experience in similar initiatives, (e.g., France and Germany, Poland and Germany, or some of the Baltic countries.)

INVITATION TO MEET ANYWHERE, WITH ANYBODY, ABOUT ANYTHING...

¶4. (C) A second building block of the Macedonian approach will be an offer to the Greek side to meet at any governmental level (president, prime minister, ministerial, or working level). The venue could be in Macedonia, Greece, or a third country. Skopje would be open to a range of discussion topics, including but not limited to the name issue.

REAFFIRM INTENT TO UPHOLDING PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS...

¶5. (C) The Macedonian government feels that Athens, in its efforts to present its side of the story, keeps referring to past bilateral frictions that have, in fact, already been settled. As a third building block, therefore, Macedonia would propose a campaign to reiterate and reaffirm the concessions Skopje already has made (e.g., its pledge to consider ethnic minority issues in Greece an internal matter, and its constitutional amendment forswearing any attempt to change state borders, among others.)

NATO OR THE NAME - A SIMPLE CHOICE FOR A NATION DEFENDING ITS IDENTITY...

¶6. (C) Emphasizing that a choice between NATO membership and keeping the country's constitutional name would present an untenable choice for Macedonia, Dimitrov confirmed that the

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GOM would not sacrifice the name, regardless of the cost. Suggesting that it would not at any rate be productive for NATO "to have a frustrated member with a challenged national identity," Dimitrov said that the government is planning to launch a diplomatic offensive to confidentially inform all NATO capitals about its stance in this regard. In that way, the GOM would make clear to NATO allies how little leeway it had on the issue. On the public front, Dimitrov promised "a relatively moderate campaign" in which it would announce its intent to "intensify efforts on the name talks."

2005 NIMETZ PROPOSAL -- THE BEST BASIS FOR THE NAME TALKS

¶7. (C) Noting that the Greeks were floating various possible name formulations with the Europeans, including "Nova Makedonija," Dimitrov said the GOM would, as a fourth step, propose that both sides revisit the October 7, 2005 Nimetz proposal for resolving the impasse as the best basis for further negotiations. (Note: The essence of the 2005 proposal is a "triple name" formula: "Republika Makedonija" to be used from 2006-2008 in Macedonia's international relations; "Republic of Macedonia" to be used in 2009 and thereafter in Macedonia's international relations; and "Republika Makedonija-Skopje" to be used by Greece either officially or in footnotes to multilateral treaties) and a time element which envisions a 15-year review of the implementation of the compromise by 2021. End note.)

¶8. (C) Dimitrov added that Skopje's message to Athens would be that "the more you increase pressure on us, the more difficult it becomes for us to be flexible." The GOM also would be clear in stating that it would not make the choice between the name and NATO -- "if it comes to that point, it will be difficult for us to maintain the 1995 Interim Accord as it currently exists," Dimitrov said.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) As we have noted in reftels, the GOM will steadfastly resist any suggestion that it change its constitutional name in exchange for NATO membership. That

position is a shared position that cuts across all party lines. At the same time, it is willing to look for a way out of the current impasse by focusing on confidence-building measures that could help reduce tensions and provide an atmosphere more conducive to working toward an eventual resolution of the name issue, perhaps based on the October 2005 Nimetz proposal. In the meantime, we believe we should support the proposals Dimitrov outlined, and should begin looking at how they can be operationalized so that the CBM process can move forward.

MILOVANOVIC